which included technical as well as commercial parameters such as experience of fund management, track record, technological platforms, management fee etc.

(b) and (c) The details of the pension accounts and pension corpus of the Central Government employees under the new pension system since 1st January, 2004 are being maintained by the Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO) under the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India, till date. The pension corpus will be managed by the three pension fund companies once the NPS architecture is made fully operational.

(d) Government has been giving a fixed return of 8% per annum on the NPS corpus till date.

Development of airport infrastructure in the country

*71. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a bid to provide world-class airport infrastructure, Government are planning to offer over 300 airports and airstrips to private players for development through the public-private partnership;

(b) whether apart from commercial use, the airstrips would also be used for providing training to pilots;

(c) whether of the 400 airports airstrips and helipads, 127 are owned by the Airports Authority of India and, only 74 are operational and the Ministry is ready to develop the remaining 53 airports along with private players; and

(d) if so, whether the development work in all the airports will be over by 2010?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) At present, there is no such plan.

(b) The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has plans to promote flying-schools at its non-operational and relatively less busy airports. AAI has, accordingly, invited Expressions of Interest (EoI).

(c) There are 453 airports/airstrips in the country belonging to AAI, Defence, State Governments and Private entities. Of these, 127 belong to AAI, including 28 civil-enclaves at defence airports, 40 AAI airports are non-operational. Such airports are taken up for development/ upgradation on request from airlines operators and the concerned State Governments. AAI has no plans to develop such airports jointly with private players.

(d) Development/Upgradation of airports is a continuous process depending upon the traffic potential, demands from airlines operators, commercial viability etc. However, development/ upgradation work of the identified 35 non-metro airports is scheduled to be completed by March, 2010.

Commercial use of ground water

*72. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any Conference on Ground Water was held in New Delhi in September, 2007;

(b) if so, what were the details of discussion and outcome thereof;

(c) which of the States are in favour of imposing levy on commercial use of ground water;

(d) whether the Prime Minister had advocated a holistic approach to water conservation, instead of subsidizing it for economic and commercial use and hinted to "put the prices of water to save it"; and

(e) if so, whether Government propose to launch a movement for water harvesting as a mission of conservation on a pattern adopted in Chennai?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) to (e) The National Congress on Ground Water was held on 11th September, 2007 at New Delhi. During the Congress, the discussion focussed on sustainable management of ground water. The need for strengthening awareness/education programmes and taking up of steps for enhancing water use efficiency was emphasised. The outcome of the Congress are given in Statement (*See* below). The issue of levy on water was not discussed with the State Government during the Congress.

The Prime Minister in his inaugural address stated that water is a national resource and an integrated view is to be taken of the country's water resources. The Prime Minister also emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in dealing with demand management as also on the importance of efficient, economic and more rational use of water. He opined that every living being has the right to potable water. He called for economic use of water specially in irrigation, construction and other sectors and observed that subsidising the economic and commercial use of water could not continue. He also stated that adequate emphasis on water conservation specially ground water has to be ensured.

Government encourages programme of water harvesting and ground water recharge.

Statement

Outcome of the Congress

- Emphasized the role of education, awareness and voluntary participation of stakeholders in ground water conservation.
- Stressed the need for equitable, efficient and sustainable water use policy.
- Expressed urgency for complete synergy in the activities of all stakeholders in the sustained development of ground water resources.
- Outlined new techniques for encouraging more income per drop of water.
- Resolved to prevent over-exploitation and pollution of ground water.
- Highlighted the role of Panchayats in ground water management.
- Stressed upon the adopted of integrated approach for water conservation; for improving water security system and increasing agricultural production.

New gas pipelines in the country

*73. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN:
SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved the request of Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) for inviting expression of interest (EoI) for 5 new natural gas pipelines in the country, including the 876 km long Jagadishpur-Haldia pipeline;

(b) if so, the details of the agencies which have been awarded these jobs along with the progress and the schedule of completion of the jobs; and